

SATURDAY, OCT. 21, 1871.

Subject: Working with God.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



New-York:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 27 PARK PLACE,

1871.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.

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# WORKING WITH GOD.

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For we are laborers together with God."—1 Cor. III., 9.

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It may be doubted whether any such comprehensive idea of God's work through the ages on earth entered into the apostle's mind, as has gradually grown up in ours. It is not necessary to suppose that the apostles knew better than we know, of the truths of Christianity. Undoubtedly the apostles understood that which the prophets only saw dimly; and unquestionably life and experience have developed in the church riper conceptions of many truths than existed in the minds of the apostles that taught those truths. In other words, truth has in itself an expansive and growing nature, and unfolds by that inward divine force which belongs to it, and in every age is larger. The truth, as a tree, is the same, but with more branches and wider outspread, and more abundant fruit. As trees come to their full nature by growth, so does the truth. Paul's earlier letters show that he certainly expected Christ to reappear and wind up all things in his day; but the traces of this expectation die out, and in his later epistles Paul speaks not so much of Christ's coming as of his own going toward Christ and the other life. These later letters show that the horizon had expanded before him; and he dwells less on the earthly consummation, and more upon the glory and grandeur of the Christian kingdom in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

One thing is clear: Paul, whatever might have been his view of the present or of the future, had risen above all the narrowness and fanatical exclusiveness of his sect. For he was of the straightest sect, he tells us, of the Pharisees. He had come to look upon the work of God as vast, including within it incomputable forces and immeasurable materials. And I suppose that the element of time had come at last in the apostle's mind to constitute no small part of the history of the future. Perhaps beyond any other, Paul had a sense of God's presence in time and in the whole flow of history. Men were all working; events were transpiring under the influence of natural causes; but there was something besides this, in his mind.

The causes were building. There was an interior and a spiritual result all the time behind the visible and the exterior. Wars, peace; governments, anarchies; industries, husbandry, commerce—these did not stop with their first and mere material products. They were building, or furnishing materials for building, the great spiritual kingdom of the divine realm. "All things," said the apostle, "work together for good." All time, and all its fluxing industries; all its whirl and distemperature; all its strifes and conflicts; the great racketing world was working, not for what it thought of, itself, but for what God behind it was thinking of. Paul felt that there was a universal power back of every movement of time, out of which came all the inspiration by which men wrought, and into which flowed back again all that they did worthily. The universality and supremacy of God in all the affairs of this world; the integrity and force of its material laws in the operation and in the productiveness of the human mind, and the still higher form of natural law, filled the apostle's imagination. There is nowhere to be found, I think, more clearly than in the letters of this magnificent man, the sense of the pervading influence—the immediate, imminent influence—of the divine forces, both to set on foot and to receive the things that are done. Cause and effect throughout the realm, to Paul, were God. Answering to the He brew declaration, he was the first and the last—the beginning and the end.

Dropping Paul, and filling out now his views, we may say that the kingdom of God on earth is something grander and larger than anything which yet appears, and that it consists essentially in the *life-forces* of mankind. It is not so much in what is made; it is not so much in the cities that are built; it is not so much in the societies that are framed, nor in the laws that are established, nor in the treasures that are accumulated, that the kingdom of God consists: That kingdom lies in the life-forces which produce these things, and which are themselves produced, educated, carried up and harmonized. God's kingdom is no sectarian parcel of men; it is commensurate with the horizon. The Jews believed God to be their private national property; and it required a special revelation to teach them that the Gentiles had rights in God as well as they.

Christians are prone to think that God is the God of Christians; but he is the God of the heathen, too. And God's kingdom can never reach its bounds until the race—until all nations, and all tongues, and all people on the globe—are included in it: not in any outward form; not in their mere spiritual aspects; but in the totality of their life-force. The kingdom of God includes the physical elements as instruments, and as controlling forces. It includes



wise civil organization. All social and strictly moral and spiritual elements belong to it. God's church on earth is ultimately to be all mankind. The churches that are, are relative to the great church that is to be. We are seeking to find one pattern to which everything else is to be brought; and we forget that the Church in this state of the development of the race is but a path. It is not the thing which we are after; it is something that leads to what we want. It is the way by which we are going, and through which we are passing; and it is not to be disesteemed.

Nor are we to treat with contempt the claim of one or another church to be better or relatively wiser than some others. But, after all, present forms of organization are subsidiary and transient. The vital form of the kingdom of God in this world is not to be that which any single sect takes. Sects are but school-houses; and perfect education takes a man out of the school-house and puts him into life. And all forms of organization—civil, social, moral, and spiritual—are things relative. The true church is to include the sum total of sanctified, purified, developed and ennobled life-force in all the races of the globe. Such is to be the church universal, in so far as this world is concerned. At any one time God's kingdom is the sum of the sanctified manhood on earth. Whoever is working in the Spirit of Christ, and for the things that are pure, and just, and true, and of good report, according to the light which he has, and according to the sphere in which, by God's providence, he is placed, belongs to that kingdom, baptized or unbaptized, with the name, or without the name of a sect, and with or without the name of Christ. It is the *Spirit* of Christ that makes the man his—not the signature; not the outward semblance; not the mere letters which spell the name. It is that which indicates the Spirit of Christ that makes us his. Wherever there is one who, according to the best light he has, and according to the sphere in which he finds himself, is working toward the things for which God is always working—there is one to whom you have a right to say, "You are a laborer together with God." No man runs out on any line of natural law, no man follows any line of social law, no man goes along the line of any spiritual law, earnestly and honestly, and with the very best light of which he is susceptible, that you may not say to him, "You are a worker and laborer with God."

This divine kingdom is the work of ages. In its nature it cannot be sudden. It accords with universal law, and is progressive. In any great result, we see, not the hand of him that puts the latest touches to the work, but behind the result the hand that prepared the way for it. We perceive great attainments in spiritual directions

in our day ; but the ages went in travail to bring forth these attainments. We sometimes arrogate to ourselves the credit for clearer views of truth ; but it was the toil, the thought, the exercitation of hoary scholars, laboring through scores of years, that prepared the glass through which, at last, we are able to behold the heavens, and sweep the constellations thereof. We say and do in our time, doubtless, many things that are wise, and good, and pleasing before God, and profitable unto men ; but we are not the makers of those things which are accomplished under our hands. We are workers together with God ; and God is the master Worker, who, through ages, puts together all the efforts of all men, and all the effects of all causes. He makes the fabric ; we but spin the thread. Michael Angelo, doubtless the greatest artist in certain directions that the world has ever seen, painted marvelously in the Sistine chapel ; but the chapel had to be built before he could paint in it ; and he was indebted to every man who carried a bucket of water ; to every mason who used a trowel ; to every carpenter who shoved a plane, or moved a saw.

Men had to grope through many ages before they knew how to put up a hut. Then after many generations more they learned to build a house. Then they learned to erect a mansion. Finally they learned to rear palaces, and then temples, and then gorgeous temples. But the knowing how to build was itself the work of ages after ages.

Late in the history of the world came Michael Angelo. There had been painters before him ; and there had been painters before them ; and there had been painters before them again. He was the product of generations of striving men. And what he did—well, he did it ; but he was simply the point through which all the efforts of the time past were expressing themselves. His art was the result of ages. Great as he was, he stood in his place in a long line of those who before him were working out the beautiful art by Divine guidance.

And so, this kingdom of God, which consists in the sum of all the sanctified forces of the human race on earth, and which is a gradual and progressive kingdom, has been spreading from the first, sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another ; to-day in this nation, and to-morrow in another nation, and the next day in another. But the sum of all is finally to be gathered up by the great Worker, the one Artist, the only supervising Mind—God. And men—generations of men, men of all descriptions, geniuses of every class—are nothing but workers. God lays the plan, and never tells men what the plan is. God it is that inspires in every



age and direction ; and he does not let men even know whither they are going, any more than a child knows where among the stars the earth swings every night, and travels every day. He is the one great Planner and Architect and Artist, and he gives final and complete form to the things which we fragmentarily do. All men are not simply laborers with God, but they are hired-men, day-laborers. The proudest, the highest, and the wisest man ; the man above whom there is no other ; the mitred bishop ; the hoary scholar, deep-furrowed with thought, after all is nothing but God's hired-man, an apprentice, a journeyman, a day-laborer, a workman. God is the one great Employer, Thinker, Planner, Supervisor.

But, while all intelligent work, from the very nature of man, requires that it should be done for a special age and for a special purpose, yet the great Worker above all employs our work for much grander ends than we ourselves conceive or design. Our work, in one sense, is far less than our pride thinks. In another sense it is far greater than our pride thinks. All right-living and all good working is more important than we imagine, or can imagine. All things that think, and feel, and will, and act in the direction in which God thinks and feels and wills and acts, and that follow those great lines of law which express the divine will and the divine purpose—these have an importance that we cannot understand here, though we shall yet one day understand them.

Men are working in a thousand ways, as it is necessary that they should, according to the nature that is given to them. They are putting forth all their life-force upon things which really seem transient, but out of which something is gathered. The great cart can hardly hold the straw and chaff of the wheat that a little boy can carry on his back. And as wheat is produced by an immense amount of straw and chaff, so in the world's harvest it seems needful that men should do ten thousand things which perish like chaff and straw. But there is something garnered out of them and saved—though we cannot always tell where, or when, or how much.

This work, in its fullest extent, will require the whole roll of mankind. This work of God in the world we have but a very imperfect conception of. We think our business in this world is to gather as many into the church as we can. That is our business. And usually the members of any particular church or sect feel that it is their duty to press that church as far as they can. There is no harm in that. But if we suppose that God's work is done in any of the churches, or that any of the churches represent the final form of God's great work in this world, how universally defective is our imagination ! and how far we are beneath the very letter, and certainly

the spirit of Christianity! It doth not appear what we shall be ourselves in the other life; and still less doth it appear what this work shall be in the ages to come, even in this world, saving men as they die off from the earth, generations going up in sequence, marching to the time of the solemn drum-beat. It is their own pulse by which God marks time. All races are moving. Some think, some feel, some plan, some work, and each one with some specialty. And God uses that specialty silently for the production of transcendently higher results than the individual workmen suspect. And it shall appear in the ages to come.

If these things are so; if, after all, there is this underlying divine spirit in providence and history, in time and among men, and in all their works; and if this divine spirit comprises every part of human life—all that belongs to our animal nature, our social condition, our civil estate, our industrial relations, and our moral and spiritual interests; and if all of them are but so many elements which God himself is employing in you, in me, in our race, in our nation, in all races and nations in every age, and he is molding and preparing them for the final form—if these things be so, then how sublime becomes the apostolic declaration to every one of us:

“Ye are laborers together with God!”

We are not isolated. We are not doing the limited work which we seem to be doing. We are working in a scheme which has God for the Architect, and Superintendent, and Finisher.

Now, see how the text runs. You perhaps thought I had forgotten my text; but I have only just come to it.

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?”

God’s slaves; servants. It is translated “ministers”; but ministers have come to be such a sort of men that you never would dream that we mean *servants* when we say *ministers*. When the apostle spoke, to be a minister was to be a slave. That is, a man who acted absolutely under the direction of Another, as Paul and Apollos did, was God’s slave, a servant, *by whom men believed, even as the Lord gave to every man*. It is as if Paul said: “I planted—that was my part; Apollos watered—that was his part; and God gave the increase. There was something behind me and my inspiration. There was something behind the wisdom and fidelity of Apollos. We threw our toil into a great realm where there was another Spirit ready, who caught it up, and made a use of it that we never could. I planted and Apollos watered under such conditions that God gave the increase.”

“So then, neither he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth—”

I beg your pardon. It’s not so. If there were no planting, do you suppose anything would come to pass? Do you suppose there



would be any wheat if there were nobody to sow it? Do you suppose there would be any corn if there were nobody to plant it? And will things grow without water?

"So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Now, when a man plants, and when he tills, with God behind him, both the planter and the cultivator are of importance; but *alone* they are no more important than the soil or the seed is without the sun in the heaven which brings summer and growth.

"For we are laborers together with God."

Our labor is indissolubly joined with his. All that which we do worthily, and which is of any account, is vitalized as well as planned by the all-pervading and ever-present spirit of the divine Soul in the world.

"We are laborers together with God."

Weak man, how strong you are if you are working with God! Strong man, how foolish it is for you to think that you are working alone, when it is God that is working in you, and when it is he, and not you, that is doing the work. Wise man, you are of very little account. What if the pane of glass should take credit for the light that comes through it? It is the sun that makes the light. Artist genius, it is God's spirit that is working in your spirit, and you are a laborer together with him, not only, but it is in him, and through him, and by him, that you do that which you do worthily.

This is a doctrine which throws a great deal of light and comfort into many low and dark places; and it ought to take down the proud looks of those who stand in high places and arrogate to themselves that which does not belong to them. The everlasting aristocracy of men, the everlasting lifting of men above their fellow men—how is it rebuked in this declaration! If you plan and do anything well and wisely, it is God that put it in you, and that works it out through you. And how does it bring up the low places to us! God works by the least and lowest things more than we can imagine.

So much for the foundation. Now for the applications.

1. In view of these considerations, I remark that the work which men perform in this world is both far greater and far less than they suppose. As it leaves man's hands, human work is poor, in the main; but as it is remoulded of God, it becomes most noble and most glorious.

When seed-wheat leaves the farmer's hands, it is good for that which you know it will come to by growth; but how poor is that which it will come to by growth, as compared with that which it is when it leaves the miller's hands! But the flour when it comes

from the miller's hands, is poor as compared with the loaf when it comes from the baker's oven. And the loaf when it leaves the baker's oven is poor as compared with the man who has eaten it, and in whom the bread has added itself to brain and muscle, and is working, having become a part of him, so that we do not say 'wheat' any more.

Our work, then, when we perform it, when it leaves our hands, oftentimes is far back of what it is coming to. We may in our ignorance put an estimate upon it, and stamp it with some value; but, after all, that which makes it valuable is what it receives afterward. We are the workers. We produce the raw material. It is manufactured by the hand of God in the great mill of his universal laws. It is what it is made to work out by the divine power, that gives it value. And what that is nobody can tell. Paul plants, and Apollos waters; and all things are pouring forward into the great stream of events and results. God it is that gives them shape, builds them into forms, and uses them.

2. God overrules the conflicts of life, and brings them to a final harmony. Judging from the endless divisions and contentions of the world, it would seem as though there was no God; and men have been tempted to doubt the existence of a God. The deepest-natured, the deepest-minded men, of every age, have always been the most skeptical. Not that they went into captivity to skepticism; but having the clearest conception of what a true moral government should be, they felt the most intensely the want of such a moral government in society. Those who have the keenest sense of divine harmony in human affairs, most feel the existence of discord in those affairs.

This has not been peculiar to any generation. Men have been disturbed by contentions, and divisions, and quarrels in the schools of philosophy. I had almost said that there never have been two parallel schools. They squabbled in Babylon, they quarreled in Greece, and they quarreled in Rome. In mediæval Europe, as much as in modern Europe, there never was harmony in philosophic schools. About government and about the administration of civil law the world has been divided. In the competitions of commerce, and of all manner of domestic and international proceedings, the world has never been at one. It has forever been in conflicts, and rivalries, and resistances.

And that which has taken place in philosophy and government and industrial pursuits, has taken place in religious beliefs. In other words, the divisions and conflicts which men have gone through on serious religious topics, are parallel to those which belong to the



race in every other direction, and are in strict analogy with them.

This seems a very rude way of bringing out final forms of glory. It seems as though it would have been a great deal easier and better for the Lord to have laid a foundation for the earth, and put soil in, as we put dirt in the flower-pot, and stick in trees of every kind; but he did not do so. He set vast masses of ice in motion, and ground down rocks. That was one part of the process. He made lichens to grow, and die, and become food for a higher order of growth. Out of the debris of former organizations, higher and higher organizations of vegetable matter were produced. And they died, and contributed to results that were still higher. And so, what with grinding rocks, and growths, and perishings, and new growths, through successive generations, the world moved forward in an ascending scale. In long ages, beyond which the imagination cannot reach, this great globe was getting ready to be a habitable house for the race of man. God prepared it for this use by slow attritions. And in strict analogy with this has been the development of men.

But when anything starts out anew in progressive unfolding, men scoff and say, "See what sort of scum it stirs up. See what kind of people it produces. See how things run together. See what quarrelings there are. See what ups and downs there are on every hand."

I should like to know if John the Baptist came with robes and velvet slippers. I should like to know if he did not come eating locusts and wild honey. I should like to know if when he came he was not rude and hirsute, and if all reformations do not come with flails. I should like to know if the world has traveled in smooth paths. I should like to know if from the beginning there have not been attritions, and quarrels, and contentions. Has there been anything else? Has not God produced every great element of change by tears? Tears and blood have been the cement by which God has built this world. Is it not by the mistakes which men have made that we have learned wisdom? Hardly anything that men have ever done in this world that was worth remaining has been done at once. Here has been the garden; and here has been the gate; and men wanting to get in have begun just at one side, and have butted their heads against every single picket all around the enclosure until they got back to the gate again; and then they stumbled in by accident, after every conceivable effort, and happened to hit the golden mean, and called it a "discovery." All the world has been toiling and travailing in pain until now. There are no forms of conflict, no forms of collision, no forms of suffering, that it has not gone through. And that which is worth preserving to-day, is that which has been

wrought out by the trials of the race of mankind on this earth ever since the day when God created them. Christ's suffering was not a thing separated from the course of time. It was the most illustrious presentation of the very genius of God in the work of upbuilding. By his suffering we are helped; and by the suffering of mankind we are helped. I do not mean to compare the suffering of man with that of God in Christ Jesus. I hold the suffering of God to be incomparably greater and inconceivably more sublime; but I believe that there is an analogy between the suffering of God and the suffering of men, and that the suffering of Christ Jesus, set down in our atmosphere, expressed, in terms that we can understand, the vast truth in respect to development through suffering.

When, therefore, men are divided, or are in conflict, you must not think that God has gone away and given up the world. Foolish men! Well, God has been using fools all the world over. He has been using short-sighted men and sinful men from the beginning. He never had any others under his care in this world. If he were to blow the trumpet to-day, and call only sanctified persons, there would not be one to march under his banner. No army could be raised unless it were made of sinners—imperfect human beings—blind, erratic, conflicting, quarreling men. Methinks God has to tax his long-suffering patience to get along with the very best of men. God forbid that I should say anything against good men in any church. But what has been the history of the Roman Church? What has been the history of the Episcopal Church in England and America? No mistakes there; straight as an arrow; no rebound; no splinters; all right; harmonious; perfect; *the Church!* What has been the history of the Methodist Church—another form of Episcopacy? What has been the history of the Presbyterian Church? Indeed, the only perfect church in the world, you know, is the Congregational Church! No heresy there; no persecutions there; no short-sighted men there; no inchoate, imperfect work there!

Oh, hear men quarrel about churches! Look at the churches and see what they are. Where is there a church that is much more than a raft for bringing men across the deluge? Some are a little better, and some are a little worse; but all are imperfect and poor. God is the perfect worker. And how is it that we are so notoriously and flagrantly intolerant, taking each other by the throat, and choking each other, as it were, saying, "Follow me; follow me." Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, that they should turn and tell men to follow them? God only is right, and we are nothing but his workmen.



Men and brethren, God did not give you common sense to be thrown away on religion. Look at these things in the light of common sense. Churches are good for what they do, and not a bit more. You might put the image and superscription of Cæsar on copper, and it would not be gold, though it was said to be gold; and a church that like Christ suffers and endures and achieves, is worth just so much and no more. And any church is valuable in the proportion in which it brings about good results. And there is not a faithful church which has not in it heroes and martyrs. There is not a church that has not ministered some material to that other kingdom which lies beyond the visible. But no men, members of churches though they be, are so infallible as to have any right to be arrogant. Every church has a right to exist in which there are members enough to keep it together; and it has a right to do as much work along the line of God's providence as it can; it may work just as hard as it pleases, but it has no right to throw stones at its neighbors. It has no right to claim that it has the last thought of God on the subject of truth, on the subject of order and discipline, or on the subject of the development of the human race. Men in churches are only God's workmen, and they must not take on airs.

3. Men should be encouraged by the thought of God's presence with them, and sustaining them.

"It is God that worketh in you."

This declaration ought to be a comfort to all who put forth, consciously, feeble hands to perform difficult tasks. Fidelity in the least things will surely find its reward; for it is God that is inspiring us and working in us.

There comes over to our shores a poor stone-cutter. The times are so bad at home that he is scarcely able to earn bread enough to eat; and by a whole year's stinting economy he manages to get together just enough to pay for a steerage passage to this country. He comes homeless and acquaintanceless, and lands in New York, and wanders over to Brooklyn, and seeks employment. He is ashamed to beg bread; and yet he is hungry. The yards are all full; but still, as he is an expert stone-cutter, a man, out of charity, says, "Well, I will give you a little work—enough to enable you to pay for your board." And he shows him a block of stone to work on. What is it? One of many parts which are to form some ornament. Here is just a quirl of fern; and there is a branch of what is probably to be a flower. He goes to work on this stone, and most patiently shapes it. He carves that bit of a fern, putting all his skill and taste into it. And by and by the master says, "Well done," and takes it away, and gives him another block, and tells him

to work on that. And so he works on that, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same, and he only knows that he is earning his bread. And he continues to put all his skill and taste into his work. He has no idea of what use will be made of those few stems which he has been carving, until afterwards, when, one day, walking along the street, and looking up at the front of the Art Gallery, he sees the stones upon which he has worked. He did not know what they were for; but the architect did. And as he stands looking at his work on that structure which is the beauty of the whole street, the tears drop down from his eyes, and he says, "I am glad I did it well." And every day, as he passes that way, he says to himself exultingly, "I did it well." He did not draw the design, nor plan the building; and he knew nothing of what use was to be made of his work; but he took pains in cutting those stems; and when he saw that they were a part of that magnificent structure, his soul rejoiced.

Dear brethren, though the work which you are doing seems small, put your heart in it; do the best you can wherever you are; and by and by God will show you where he has put that work. And when you see it stand in that great structure which He is building, you will rejoice in every single moment of fidelity with which you wrought. Do not let the seeming littleness of what you are doing now damp your fidelity.

4. Let every one work according to his light, and according to his opportunity; for it is God that rewards. He gives grace to the humble. And grace is beauty, I think.

Go with me to Mansfield, Connecticut, and I will show you a scene that is not very agreeable—namely, ten thousand worms eating mulberry leaves, and making a noise like rain pouring on a roof. Is there anything more disgusting? When they are about done eating, you will see them commence, with strange antics, to weave a sepulchral cocoon. They are going to sleep. They do not know what for. Their instinct does not teach them that. It only teaches them to build their tombs out of their bodies. They draw out the glutinous matter into a fine thread, and wind it around and around them; and finally they go to sleep, and close up the orifice; and there they lie. Then comes a man who takes those cocoons. After some little preparation he unwinds the silk. And then it is spun; and then it is woven; and then it is dyed; and then it is shaped; and a queenly form wears the gorgeous silk; and it is the admiration of all the people round about. That is the result. But the worm only made the thread; and the spindle doubled and twisted it; and the loom made the fabric; and other hands took the fabric, and shaped it to the human form; and a human being wore it.



When God puts on the robe, the threads or films of which you have worked out in this life; when he puts together the various parts of the garment which you are helping to make, you will be glad of everything you have done, if you have done it faithfully.

What if you are in a humble place, and no man sees you, and hears you? What if your name does not get into the newspapers? So much the better. Why does a man want a pillory? Is it not better to work without praise than with it? Work well; work with all your strength; and work where you are until God calls you higher. Work so well below that he cannot afford to keep you there. Men go around looking for higher places; but the way to get higher is to work so well that it is bad economy to have you in a lower place. Then you will go up by natural force. Put your best work into every place where God calls you.

It is related (I do not know with how much truth) that when Phidias was carving the statue of Diana to be placed on the Acropolis, he was working at the backside of the head, and was bringing out with his chisel every filament of the hair, as far as it could be done in marble; and it was said to him, "That figure is to go up a hundred feet, and is to stand with its back to the marble wall; and who will ever know what work you put there?" But replied he, "The gods will know," and worked on.

Now, do not hesitate to put your best work in the lowliest places; for if other folks do not know it God will.

5. The interactions of all true work, and its consummation by God, affords a real comfort to all who see others do a great deal, while they do but very little. I have been called to the side of persons who have been confined to a sick bed for months, and sometimes even for years—spirits that one might suppose would naturally have had a function in life, but for whom there was nothing to do but to lie, white as the linen in which they were enveloped, and who wondered why God should let others have opportunity, and they should have none. My friend, there is something to be done by lying still, often, as well as by moving about. Besides, you are one of the great body of God's laborers, and you have a share in the sum total of all the work which is done by all your brethren.

If there is anything I like to see, it is, when the clock strikes twelve (it is astonishing how quick the ear is to detect the stroke of twelve!) to see the workmen all fling off, and, if it is summer, gather themselves in the shade of some tree or rock. Then you shall see the little maiden pattering round the corner, with a basket or pail on her arm. What is in it? The workman's dinner, along with the mother's blessing. I sometimes stand and see the men open

their dinner. I was once asked to help eat it. I considered it a compliment. The white bread, and the store of meat, and all the other little perquisites, making a relishful dinner, sent by the mother to the father, looked tempting enough.

Now, when the cathedral is done, has not that little girl a right to stand and say, "I helped to build that"? You! Show me what you did. "I carried the dinner pail to my father while he worked." Well, she was a worker.

Any man who supports anybody; any man who gives what is better than silver and gold, or conveys a higher conception of it, any man who gives hope and encouragement to another, is helping to build God's great temple. You may not be able to speak in meeting, or write poetry, or deliver discourses, or run about and distribute the charities of God. You may be shut off from all activity. And then all you can do is to be patient and serene, and pray to God. That is your part, and God blesses it. And it is no mean part.

Ah! when the trumpeter sounds his trumpet, and it is heard afar off by every soldier, do you not suppose that trumpet warning is more than the stroke of any single man who goes into the battle? He who inspires other people; he who teaches men that the human soul can rise above its infirmities; he who in any way helps men more easily and more successfully to carry the burdens of this life, and prepare for a state of blessedness in the other life, is a prophet, and a worker together with God.

If, then, God has put you in a humble place in the world; if you are placed below many of your fellows who are apparently no more deserving than you are, do not complain. Willingly stand where God wants you to stand. Be a witness for God wherever you are. So you will be one of God's workers; in the other life it will be known what you have done; and it will be no inconspicuous share of that great work which is going on under God's supervision.

6. A generous contentment can and should inspire homely work, by a consideration of its relations to the welfare of society. The greatest part of the things which are to be done in this world are things which men do not like to do. More than half the trades that men follow are not trades that are acceptable to those who follow them. I do not wonder that the artist loves to paint. Painting is intrinsically pleasant. In sitting before the canvas and evolving one's fancies in color and form there is reward at every step. But the work of the plumber, he burrowing like a mole, lying in cramped positions, and choked and chilled in damp and dark places, where what he does will not be seen—that is not agreeable. The hod-



carrier does not like his work. He that mixes the mortar does not like his work. Boys that open and shut stores do not find their duties pleasant. The greatest number of men who work in this world are obliged to work on things which are not in themselves particularly pleasant. Therefore there should be some high moral consideration that should inspire and help them. They should remember not only that God put them where they are, but that every man who does anything is working for the cause of God.

When the Israelites would fain have the gold for their tabernacle, they called for contributions. The rich sent theirs, and the poor sent theirs. Everybody sent something of silver or gold. Some sent the ornaments which they had. Suppose among the rest a Jewish maiden who had nothing in the world to give but a ring that her mother, who had gone up to the God of Israel, gave her. Others were carrying their superfluous gold, and she could not stay at home and see all her sisters and friends giving something to the Lord's sanctuary, and give nothing herself. So she drew off the ring from her slender finger, and carried it and put it in with the other gifts. It amounted to but little, and it seemed small to those who looked on. It scarcely tinkled as it went down into the treasury. But oh! was it not much to her? And when he who laid an everlasting blessing on the example of the widow who cast in her mite, saying, "She has given more than they all"—when he beheld the offering of that poor Jewish maid, do not you suppose his eye rested on that more than on the larger gifts of those who were rich?

No matter what you are doing, no matter how humble a sphere you are called to work in, whatever you have to do, do it with all your might, because you are working for God.

I bless God for that one thing which the apostle said to slaves. If there is one class of men who would not have the least motive for fidelity to another, it would be they who did not own themselves; and he told them not to lie, not to purloin, but to be industrious, to be obedient, and to serve their masters with all fidelity. It used to be convenient to stop there; but what did the apostle say further?

*"As to the Lord, and not unto men."*

As much as to say, "There could not be one single motive drawn from any such relation as that which exists between you and your masters; but serve as unto Christ—not as unto them."

So, in all our relations in life we are workers with God, and we are workers for the same great ends for which God works, and which he has been compassing through generations countless. And since we are working with him, let us make the least contributions nobly, generously, gladly, and rejoice in our work as we go along.

But I must close; the theme is larger than the time. What you

are to do in this great work of God, make haste to do quickly. The time is short. You must be active while there is opportunity. In your houses; in the thoroughfares where men meet; in your relations to society; in the church; in the outwalk of charity; wherever you are, whatever gifts of thought or hand you have to contribute, give them freely and gladly. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. Remember that you are giving, not to man, but to God; and remember that you are working, not for men, but for God. Remember that he takes your gifts and molds them into shape; and that he takes your work, and adds it to the work which, through all his creatures, he is working out. And when you look back from the other life upon what you did here, though it seemed poor and mean to you at the time, you will marvel at the wondrous grace and beauty which there is in it.

You are working for a good and generous Master. So work well and work long, and do not seek the glory till you rise to receive it in the light of his countenance. For all things are yours, in life and in death. All men are yours. The heavenly host are yours. You are Christ's, and Christ is God's. The glory of the final estate will be yours, and you will have your share in the resplendent wealth of God Almighty's universe.

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### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou, O God, art the only one to whom we can come without reserve; for, thou understandest perfectly the thoughts and the intents of our heart, long before they are framed into feelings. Thou seest the rising germs. Long before they blossom or bring forth fruit thou knowest what is in them. We are dwelling in the sphere where thou hast planted us, under the laws which thou hast established; and thou art altogether acquainted with our weakness; with our infirmity; with our transgression; with our aspiration; with our struggle for that which we desire; for our conflicts against evil. Thou that hast been a sufferer, Jesus, almighty now, now in the realm of light and victory—thou hast been a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Thou hast walked in our places. Upon thee hath fallen the buffet. Upon thee hath rested the crown. Upon thee came care and temptation. Upon thee broke all those waves which sway hither and thither the sympathies of men. Thou wert tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. It is some hope and some comfort to know that there has been a sinless Nature. We cannot aspire to walk in thy steps, and to the very end. Until the last breath we must be conscious that thou art taking care of us, not because we are perfect, but as sinful creatures. We are by the grace of God saved. It is not of ourselves—it is of thy love, of thy abundant mercy, that we are spared. And this is the light that comes forth from thee; this is the glory and the whole atmosphere of heaven—the helpful, pitying, enriching love of God, pouring forth endlessly, and in circuits beyond all measurement, all conception. Thou dost take us up in our littleness, and mold us little by little out of our imperfections, pardoning, sparing, waiting, and still waiting with everlasting suffering—long suffering—for the realms which thou



hast created. Thou art the wondrous-working God, the School-master of the Universe, the Nurse of things that are. Thou art the Friend of the friendless. Thou art the Brother of those that need some one to guide them. Thou art the Counselor. Thou art the bright Way. Thou art the Door at the end thereof. Thou art the Bread of life to every one that hungers. Thou art the Water of life to those that are athirst. Thou art the Star when no moon shines in our night, and no sun in our day. Thou art the Sun of righteousness with healing in its beams. What thou art, what all this means, we cannot tell. Sometimes thou seemest as one, and sometimes another; but always full of grace, always wise, always gentle, and always desiring to draw us up toward that incomprehensible sphere in which thou art dwelling thyself. We hear thy voice—yet not outwardly. We feel thy leading—yet our hand touchest nothing. Thou art in us; thou art around us. This we know—that of all creatures we should be most orphaned and desolate, if the world were to our belief empty of thee. Nor can we be desolate if the world is full of thy presence, and if thou dost by thy Spirit make us to know that we are the sons of God. Blessed be thy name that thou dost not require perfection; that we do not need to wait until we are perfect before we present ourselves to thee. To thee came the lame, the halt and the blind; to thee came the deaf; to thee came, borne, the very dead; and thou didst give all that which they needed. To thee still come the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dead in transgression and in sin; and thou art more wondrously working miracles of mercy. Blessed be thy name for all thy grace and for all thy goodness. Teach us how better to understand thee; and that we may understand thee better, teach us how to imitate thee, and how to be to other men something of all that which thou art to us—as lenient, as gentle, as patient, as forgiving, as loving, as helpful, as self-denying, as long-suffering. And we beseech of thee that thus bringing unto ourselves something of that life which thou art living, we may be able to lift our imagination to a higher conception of what is the grandeur and the fullness of thy divine life. And so may we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Draw near to thy servants this morning in thy presence; and may each one of them feel that thou art standing over against him as well as over against the congregation, and saying to him, What is thy petition? Accept the thanksgiving of those whose hearts overflow to-day with thanks. Grant, we pray thee, that those who yearn to-day to love thee more, may feel that thou dost recognize their desire, and that thou art graciously pleased to accept their affection. May those who look dimly, but cannot see thee, and who yet discern something, behold thee more clearly revealed to their faith. And if thou art coming to any upon the sea again at night, and they are terrified at thy coming, and it seems to them as though it were a day of judgment and condemnation, speak to them, and say, It is I; be not afraid. Out of every Providence which draws near, speak to us, Saviour, saying, It is I. May we believe that all things work together for good to them that love God. May we have this sovereign assurance. Direct all that we do. May we love God with implicit trust. Draw near to those who are heavy laden. Grant that they may hear thee say to them, Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And may they find rest under thy burdens; and may they find that thy yoke is not a restraint.

Grant that to those who this morning from afar off send up their petitions, and wistfully think of the worshiping congregation, and hear in their silence the songs of praise and the voice of prayer—grant that to them the psalms of God, winged, may fly from the altar of the sanctuary to-day even as odors are wafted from a garden afar off. May thy blessing follow them every whither. Large is our household and family in Christ

Jesus. Some are on the sea. There are some in every land around the globe. Grant that to-day the joys of our home service may reach all our wanderers wherever they are scattered up and down through the earth.

Grant, we pray thee, if there are those in thy presence who are bowed down with sorrow, that they may not break beneath the load that weighs them down. May the wind of heaven that comes to shake the bough overladen with rain or dew, not break it utterly. Come to those who are weighed down, and disburden them of their griefs, and teach them how little a thing it is to suffer in life, if they but have in them the hope and pledge of immortality and joy in heaven.

Be with those who sit in the mouth of the sepulcher. May they see angels there that shall say to them, He is not here—he is risen. Grant that all those who have sent before them their dear ones may feel that they have not lost them. How much precious seed have we all planted! How sweet and precious are the places of memory! Oh, give us the Christian's faith and hope, that we may discern beyond the planting, and see what is the resurrection, the joy and the glory of that which is beyond.

And we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant to those who are longing for strength, the pledge of thy help to-day. If there are any who mourn over easily besetting sins, who are so filled with remorse that they cannot look up, and who smite on their breasts saying, Be merciful to us miserable sinners, be merciful to them, and tell them of thy sweet intent; tell them how gracious God is, that they may not perish, but have strength and comfort in love.

May those who have wandered out of the way come back again to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. May all that see them succor them. And grant that while we pursue the way of truth and integrity, and seek to build up justice and integrity in the land, we may still not forget our brother. May we never forget that men are all like ourselves sinners before God, and that if God should deal as unmercifully with us as we do with each other none of us could stand for an hour. While we seek for things that are true, and right, and pure, and just, may we also seek for the things that are merciful, and that shall restore rather than destroy.

And we pray, O Lord, that thou wilt bless thy word in this congregation, and everywhere. May it be a searching word. May it be a seed-bearing word. May it be a word bearing life and light and perfume to every one to whom it is preached. We beseech of thee that in all thy churches of every name thy Gospel may have great power to do the work for which it is appointed.

We pray that thou wilt more and more unite thy people. Teach them to bear more with each other. May offenses cease. Grant that there may be more and more unity inwardly and spiritually. Grant, we pray thee, that all throughout our land who labor for the promotion of morality, may be blessed of God. May intelligence spread. May schools and academies and colleges be blessed of God, purified and sanctified. And may there be raised up in our land a generation to serve God. And at last may there be a nation that shall dwell in righteousness. May there be a nation whose eyes shall not be red with blood or fierce with destruction, but full of pity and compassion. Speak by the voice of this whole people; and may they be witnesses, not only of liberty but to the power of godliness, which alone can give true liberty.

Let thy kingdom come. Let thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. And to thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shall be ascribed everlasting praise. *Amen*



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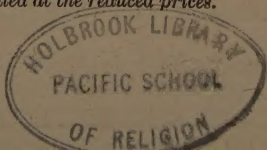
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
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